

21 March 2024

Nocturnal Dialysis Provision

Request for Freedom of Information relating to ALL correspondence for the failure to provide nocturnal dialysis for myself and other patients as had been promised during 2023

Clarification: I am requesting information on the discussions and decisions for nocturnal dialysis in the Belfast Trust and also the same information for other Trusts where nocturnal dialysis has already been provided in Nireland. I do not require any specific information on any patients, except for the numbers of patients for which this enhanced dialysis service has already been provided.

Currently the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) does not offer the option of Nocturnal Haemodialysis therapy as part of service provision. Since 2020, the majority of chronic haemodialysis therapy is provided Monday to Sunday within the hours of 07:00 to 19:00 within the Haemodialysis Unit. We currently have 140 patients attending our Haemodialysis Unit, the majority of which attend three sessions per week with extended therapy hours or sessions accommodated as required.

Home Haemodialysis is provided regionally as an alternative treatment option. This involves in depth training provided to patients and/or relatives and carers. It takes a minimum of 4 weeks to learn how to use the dialysis machine safely. Patients also need to learn how to look after their own dialysis access, either a fistula, graft or line. This training is provided initially in Knockbreda Treatment centre or in the patients home dialysis unit with the final few weeks spent at home with a senior nurse from BHSCT.

In September 2022 the Nephrology Service in BHSCT became aware of a research study "Nightlife". This study is multi-centre taking place across the UK. The study aims to determine if Nocturnal Dialysis is beneficial to patients requiring chronic haemodialysis in comparison to those patients receiving day time treatment. The patient selection for this study being randomised based on medical stability.

Criteria for inclusion in study included (As outlined in Nightlife Study)

- Established on HD for 3 months
- 18 years & over
- Ability to consent
- Ability to participate in interventions and follow up procedures.

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The Nephrology Service carried out an Options Appraisal in relation to participant in this study involving medical, nursing and management colleagues. The review identified a number of challenges impacting on the ability of the service to provide nocturnal haemodialysis as part of the NightLife Research Study.

- Current and anticipated HD capacity
- Ability to provide safe nurse staffing levels and expertise
- Appropriate medical cover
- Suitability of the current patient cohort. The participation of a minimum of 6 – 10 patients would be required due to the agreed staffing level of 3 RNs.
- Review of the required support services
- Current regional provision of HD

The BHSCT recognises the potential clinical benefit of the provision of nocturnal dialysis for patients with kidney disease requiring haemodialysis therapy including increased life expectancy (approaching that of having a deceased donor kidney transplant) and improved quality of life with virtually no dietary or fluid restriction, decreased medication burden (less blood pressure medication and phosphate binders) and return of fertility for females.

It is with regret that the BHSCT is not currently in a position to provide nocturnal haemodialysis therapy as a treatment option. Unfortunately, safe service delivery is impacted by a number of factors including staff engagement, safe medical and nurse staffing levels, haemodialysis capacity and the identification of a suitable cohort of patients. The Nephrology Service remains committed to exploring the viability of nocturnal haemodialysis provision and will continue to review potential options including a regional approach.

We are unable to provide information regarding services provided by other health trusts in Northern Ireland.